

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EB-08 AGRE-00 AID-05 COME-00 TRSE-00 IGA-02
IO-13 SIL-01 LAB-04 OMB-01 /100 W
-----251630 045052 /45

R 251200Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6484
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
CINCUSNAVEUR
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0171

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT ECON MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - FEBRUARY 25

REF: PORT LOUIS 143

SUMMARY. PORT LOUIS 0170 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE.
END SUMMARY

1. MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED FOR
APRIL 24. NOMINATION DAY (REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES) WILL BE
MARCH 16. THERE WILL BE 126 COUNCILLORS CHOSEN IN 19 WARDS
OF THE FIVE MUNICIPALITIES. VOTERS WILL TOTAL ABOUT 207,000,
OR ABOUT 75,000 MORE THAN VOTED IN THE LAST MUNICIPALS HELD
IN 1969.

2. MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY(MPSD) LEADER DUVAL TOLD
THE PRESS THAT THERE WILL DEFINITELY BE AN "ARRANGEMENT"
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BETWEEN HIS PARTY AND LABOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS SO THAT
THEY WILL NOT RUN AGAINST EACH OTHER BUT AGAINST THE MAURITIAN
MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM). HE HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO
RUN HIMSELF. HE SAID HIS PARTY PLAYS A MODEST ROLE IN THE
COALITION, IN PROPORTION TO THE SUPPORT IT RECEIVED FROM THE
VOTERS IN THE LAST ELECTIONS. HE SAID HIS PARTY COULD DO
NOTHING TO PREVENT A MMM-LABOR COALITION IF THAT IS IN THE

OFFING, DUVAL LOOKS FORWARD TO A SECOND ROUND AGAINST THE MMM IN THE NEW NATIONAL ELECTIONS.

3. THE NEWSPAPER LE MAURICIEN, KNOWN TO BE SYMPATHETIC TO THE MMM, HAS SPECULATED ABOUT A POSSIBLE COALITION OF THE MMM WITH THE LABOR PARTY. THIS EDIA WAS SEVERELY DENOUNCED BY MMM LEADER BERENGER, WHO SAID NO SUCH DISCUSSIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE SINCE FORMATION OF THE LABOR-PMSD COALITION.

4. THE LEADERS OF THE MMM ADDRESSED A PARTY RALLY ATTENDED BY ABOUT 15,000 PERSONS IN PORT LOUIS ON FEBRUARY 21. THE SPEAKERS DENOUNCED THE PRESENT "GOVERNMENT OF THE RIGHT" AND THE "CAPITALIST SYSTEM" AND DECLARED THE READINESS OF THE MMM TO TAKE POWER. IN FACT, THEY PREDICTED THAT THE MMM WOULD BE IN POWER WITHIN A YEAR, FOLLOWING NEW ELECTIONS. THEY DENIED HAVING HAD ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LABOR PARTY ABOUT A COALITION.

5. YVES NOEL, A MAGISTRATE, IS SLATED TO REPLACE NIGEL HESELTINE, AN IRISHMAN, AS RESIDENT COMMISSIONER ON RODRIGUES ISLAND. HESELTINE, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE A GOOD ADMINISTRATOR, WAS NOT LIKED BY MOST RODRIGUANS. NOEL SERVED PREVIOUSLY IN RODRIGUES AND IS VERY POPULAR THERE. HE IS CLOSE TO GAETAN DUVAL, LEADER OF THE PMSD, WHICH CONSIDERS RODRIGUES ITS FIEF.

6. GUY OLLIVRY, LEADER OF THE MAURITIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (UDM), DECLARED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE THAT HIS PARTY IS A LEFTIST PARTY WHICH "FILLS A VOID" BETWEEN THE EXTREME LEFT REPRESENTED BY THE MMM AND THE RIGHT AND EXTREME RIGHT OF THE LABOR PARTY AND THE PMSD RESPECTIVELY. THE UDM IS FOR CHANGE, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND DOES NOT WISH THE ONLY POSSIBILITY FOR REAL CHANGE TO BE CLAIMED BY THE EXTREME LEFT (THE MMM). THE UDM STANDS FOR SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY, HE SAID, AND SUPPORTS A PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN ORDER TO PREVENT DICTATORSHIP AND THE SINGLE PARTY SYSTEM. THE PARTY HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO CONTEST THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

7. LE MILITANT, ORGAN OF THE MMM, HAS REPORTED THA THE POLISARIO FRONT OFFICIALLY INVITED THE MMM TO ATTEND THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES OF THE "SAHARA DEMOCRATIC ARAB REPUBLIC". THE INVITATION CAME SO LATE THAT THE MMM COULD NOT SEND A DELEGATION BUT IT DID SEND A MESSAGE OF WARM CONGRATULATIONS.

8. MMMSP LEADER DEV VIRAHSAWMY'S POLITICAL PLAY CALLED "LI", WHICH HE WROTE WHILE IN PRISON IN 1971, HAS BEEN BANNED BY THE GOVERNMENT. IT WAS TO HAVE BEEN PRESENTED IN LATE MARCH TO MARK THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARTY PAPER, SOLEIL ROUGE. GROUNDS FOR THE BANNING WERE NOT ANNOUNCED.

9. ON HIS RETURN FROM ACP SUGAR TALKS WITH THE EEC IN BRUSSELS, AGRICULTURE MINISTER BOOLELL WAS SOMEWHAT MORE ENCOURAGING THAN HE WAS ON HIS RETURN FROM BARBADOS (PORT LOUIS 93). PRICE TALKS WILL RESUME IN APRIL, BUT THE MINISTER SAID HE EXPECTS EEC PRICES WILL BE AT LEAST AS HIGH AS THOSE RECEIVED IN 1976 AND PERHAPS SLIGHTLY HIGHER. AS FOR SUGAR EXPORTS BEYOND THE 500,000 TONS TAKEN BY THE COMMOR MARKET. THEY WILL HAVE TO BE SOLD AT THE WORLD MARKET PRICE, AND THAT IS LOW, HE SAID. OTHER OUTSTANDING ISSUES WITH THE EEC WERE MOSTLY RESOLVED, SIR SATCAM SAID, EXCEPT FOR THE COSTS OF STORAGE QUESTION. TALKS ON A NEW INTERNATIONAL SUGAR AGREEMENT TO STABILIZE PRICES ON THE FREE MARKET WILL BE HELD IN GENEVA IN APRIL.

10. THE STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO U.S. AGRICULTURE SECRETARY BEGGLAND THAT HE WILL ADVOCATE A REDUCTION IN US SUGAR IMPORTS HAS NATURALLY RECEIVED PUBLICITY HERE. A REPRESENTATIVE OF
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THE MAURITIAN SUGAR INDUSTRY SAID IT IS TOO EARLY TO GUESS WHAT CHANGES MAY BE MADE IN AMERICAN SUGAR LEGISLATION, AND NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME, MAURITIUS SHOULD FARE WELL BECAUSE OF ITS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN SUPPLYING SUGAR TO THE U.S. DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF AN AGREEMENT FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS.

11. THE SITUATION IN THE PORT HAS IMPROVED, BUT A NEW SURCHARGE OF 10 PERCENT (UP TO 35 PERCENT) HAS BEEN IMPOSED ON FREIGHT FROM SOUTH AFRICA BECAUSE OF THE DELAYS.

12. DURING THE FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER NEW, HIGHER BUS FARES WENT INTO EFFECT SOME IRATE COMMUTERS REFUSED TO PAY THE HIGHER RATES AND EVEN THREATENED DRIVERS AND FARE COLLECTORS. THESE INCIDENTS WERE SERIOUS ENOUGH TO CAUSE THE BUS DRIVERS' UNION TO THREATEN A STRIKE. THE MMM AGITATED THE ISSUE, BUT MOST RIDERS ARE MORE INTERESTED IN BETTER SERVICE THAN IN ARGUING OVER THE FARES.

13. THE GOVERNMENT HAS AGREED TO INSTITUTE A FORTY-HOUR WEEK FOR CIVIL SERVANTS EFFECTIVE JULY 1. THIS HAS BEEN A PET SCHEME OF GAETAN DUVAL, HEAD OF THE PMSD, WHO PROMOTED THE IDEA ON BEHALF OF THE CIVIL SERVANTS UNION.

14. ALMOST ALL OF THE FUEL OIL HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THE SHIP WHICH IS AGROUND OUTSIDE PORT LOUIS HARBOR, THE "GRAND BETELGUEUSE," REDUCING THE DANGER OF POLLUTION. SOME OF THE CARGO OF MANGANESE ORE WILL HAVE TO BE REMOVED BEFORE THE SHIP CAN BE REFLOATED. IT IS BELIEVED THAT ASSISTANCE FOR THE LATTER OPERATION IS BEING SOUGHT FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN FIRM.

15. ON FEBRUARY 22 THE USS LONG BEACH ARRIVED AT PORT LOUIS

FOR A ROUTINE THREE AND ONE-HALF DAY VISIT. PRESS REACTION
WAS GENERALLY FRIENDLY AND FAVORABLE, WITH ONLY LA VIE CATHOLIQUE
(A WEEKLY) CATEGORIZING THE VISIT AS "UNDESIRABLE". THE MMM'S
LE MILITANT PUBLISHED AN EXPECTEDLY CRITICAL EDITORIAL. THE
ROUND OF CALLS, RECEPTIONS, LUNCHEONS, AND OTHER EVENTS WHICH
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THE VISIT GENERATED WERE WELL ATTENDED AND APPARENTLY APPRECIATED
BY BOTH THE MAURITIANS AND THE SHIP'S PERSONNEL.
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Message Attributes

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